

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 309037
ORIGIN EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /013 R

66011
DRAFTED BY:EUR;SOV;LWILLEMS:REH
APPROVED BY:EUR;SOV;RLBARRY
EUR/RPM - JMADDEN

----- 097125 /61

R 221800Z DEC 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUFHOL/AMEMBASSY BONN 7192
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 309037

FOLLOWING REPEAT MOSCOW 19676 ACTION SECSTATE, INFO LENINGRAD
DTD 17 DEC 76.

QTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 19676

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CSCE, UR, US
SUBJECT: MOSCOW JEWISH CULTURAL SYMPOSIUM

REF: (A) MOSCOW 18576, (B) STATE 304863

1. SUMMARY. ORGANIZERS HOPE TO CONVENE CULTURAL SYMPOSIUM
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AS SCHEDULED ON DEC 21. PRESSURE ON THE ORGANIZERS HAS
INCREASED ALTHOUGH NO ONE HAS YET BEEN ARRESTED. WHILE
ORGANIZERS TALK HOPEFULLY, THEY ARE IN FACT PESSIMISTIC
THAT IT WILL COME OFF AS PLANNED. END SUMMARY.

2. WE RECEIVED DEC 16 A RUNDOWN ON PRESENT PLANS OF THE

ORGANIZERS OF THE JEWISH SYMPOSIUM. THEY STILL HOPE TO OPEN THE SYMPOSIUM ON THE 21ST AND PLAN IT TO RUN FOR THREE DAYS. THE AGENDA REMAINS AS BEFORE. THE ORGANIZERS FEEL THAT THEY MUST NOT BACK DOWN AT THIS STAGE IN RESPONSE TO INCREASING PRESSURE TO CANCEL THE SYMPOSIUM.

3. PRESSURE HAS TAKEN A NUMBER OF FORMS. AS REPORTED BY WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS, DEPUTY CULTURE MINISTER POPOV CALLED IN SEVERAL OF THE ORGANIZERS LAST WEEK AND INFORMED THEM THAT IT WOULD BE "DANGEROUS" FOR THE SYMPOSIUM TO TAKE PLACE. SINCE THEN, SEARCHES OF THE APARTMENTS OF VARIOUS OF THE ORGANIZERS HAVE OCCURRED AND THEY HAVE BEEN RECEIVING MUCH MORE COMPREHENSIVE KGB TAILING AND HARRASSMENT. ON THE 14TH, FAYN, THE HEAD OF THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE, AND THREE OTHER MEMBERS WERE RECEIVED BY VERGELIS, A CHIEF APOLOGIST FOR SOVIET OFFICIAL POLICY ON JEWS AND THE EDITOR OF THE YIDDISH-LANGUAGE SOVIETISHE HEIMLAND. VERGELIS REPORTEDLY APPEALED TO THE ORGANIZERS (AS ONE JEW TO ANOTHER) TO CANCEL THE SYMPOSIUM IN THE NAME OF JEWISH SOLIDARITY. OUR SOURCES COMMENT THAT HIS APPEAL WAS MARRED BY THE FACT THAT HE ADDRESSED THE ORGANIZERS IN YIDDISH WHILE THEY INSISTED ON RESPONDING IN HEBREW. EVEN VERGELIS HAD TO ADMIT THE INCONGRUITY OF FINALLY USING RUSSIAN AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

4. THE ORGANIZERS POINT TO SEVERAL FACTORS WHICH, THEY SAY, INCREASE SOMEWHAT THEIR CHANCES OF HOLDING THE SYMPOSIUM. THEY OBSERVE THAT IT WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER BREZHNEV'S BIRTHDAY AND THUS MAY NOT BE SEEN BY THE AUTHORITIES AS INTERFERING WITH THAT EVENT. INCREASED CONFIDENTIAL

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WESTERN INTEREST IN THE SEMINAR, RESULTING FROM THE SOVIET REFUSAL TO PERMIT THE WESTERN INVITEES TO ATTEND, MAY MAKE THE AUTHORITIES DECIDE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE WORTHWHILE TO ARREST THE SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS. THEY ALSO POINT OUT THAT SHOULD THE COLLOQUIUM NOT TAKE PLACE, THE PUBLICITY WHICH IT HAS ALREADY GENERATED IN THE WEST AND THE HOLDING OF "PARALLEL" SYMPOSIA IN THE U.S., EUROPE AND ISRAEL WILL MEAN THAT MANY OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE SYMPOSIUM WILL HAVE BEEN MET.

5. IN FACT, MOST OF THE ORGANIZERS ARE PESSIMISTIC THAT THE SYMPOSIUM WILL BE ALLOWED TO TAKE PLACE. MOST FEEL THAT THEY WILL EITHER BE ARRESTED AND PUT AWAY FOR 15 DAYS OR SIMPLY LOCKED UP FOR THE THREE DAYS DURING WHICH THE SYMPOSIUM IS SUPPOSED TO TAKE PLACE. ALL OUR SOURCES AGREE THAT IT IS EXCLUDED THAT THE AUTHORITIES WILL SIMPLY ALLOW THE SYMPOSIUM TO TAKE PLACE WITHOUT HARASSMENT, EVEN THOUGH, IN PUBLIC RELATION TERMS, THAT WOULD

BE THE BEST RESULT FOR THEM.

6. WITH RESPECT TO THE SPECIFIC QUESTION IN STATE REFTEL,
AS OF THE VEENING OF DEC 16, NONE OF THE ORGANIZERS HAD
BEEN ARRESTED.

MATLOCK
UNQTE: ROBINSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: JEWS, HARASSMENT, SEMINARS, CULTURES, MEETING DELEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE309037
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EUR;SOV;LWILLEMS:REH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760470-0026
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761220/aaaaaqsb.tel
Line Count: 123
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 MOSCOW 18576, 76 STATE 304863
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 APR 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <06 AUG 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MOSCOW JEWISH CULTURAL SYMPOSIUM
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UR, CSCE
To: BONN BRUSSELS COPENHAGEN MULTIPLE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006